

LARGER ELM LEAF BEETLE

MONOCESTA CORYLI

This summer we are seeing outbreaks of the larger elm leaf beetle, *Monocesta coryli*, one of our larger leaf beetles. Damage is visible in Newberry County but is historically common in the strip of counties from York southwest to McCormick County. Both the larvae and the adults feed on the foliage, but the larvae cause the most damage, skeletonizing leaves and giving foliage a scorched appearance. Most trees recover, and there is usually no need for treatment.

Overview

The larger elm leaf beetle is native to the eastern United States, ranging from Pennsylvania to Florida and west to Kansas. In South Carolina we most often see it in a strip of counties running from York to McCormick.

Signs/Symptoms

Infested trees look scorched from a distance. Closer inspection will reveal skeletonized foliage and adult beetles or, more often, the larvae. The adult beetle is approximately half an inch long and is orange and metallic blue in color. The larva is an orange grub approximately 3/4 inch in length.

Lifecycle

Females deposit egg masses on the underside of host foliage in the spring. Egg masses can contain anywhere from 20 to 60 eggs. The young larvae are green to yellow and feed gregariously for several days before dispersing to feed apart. When larvae are mature, they move down the trunk and into the soil. They remain as dormant larvae until the following winter, when they pupate. They remain as pupae for about a month and then emerge as adults and begin the cycle again. There is only one generation per year.

Timeline

The damage is most prominent in mid-to-late summer.

Management

Management is usually not required. If trees are repeatedly attacked, a homeowner can band a tree with an insect barrier like Tanglefoot before the larvae move down to the soil.

Contact information

For more information on larger elm leaf beetle, please contact the Forest Health Division of the South Carolina Forestry Commission at djenkins@scfc.gov.



Larvae of the larger elm leaf beetle on a winged elm.



An infested winged elm shows the scorched nature of damage.